

# Case Study Example #2 – Walnut Creek

## Impetus for Parking Program

There is a perceived parking shortage in Downtown Walnut Creek, particularly for prime on-street spaces and at a few off-street lots and garages. Available on-street parking is of great importance for a continued vibrant and accessible downtown.

## Goals & Guiding Principles:

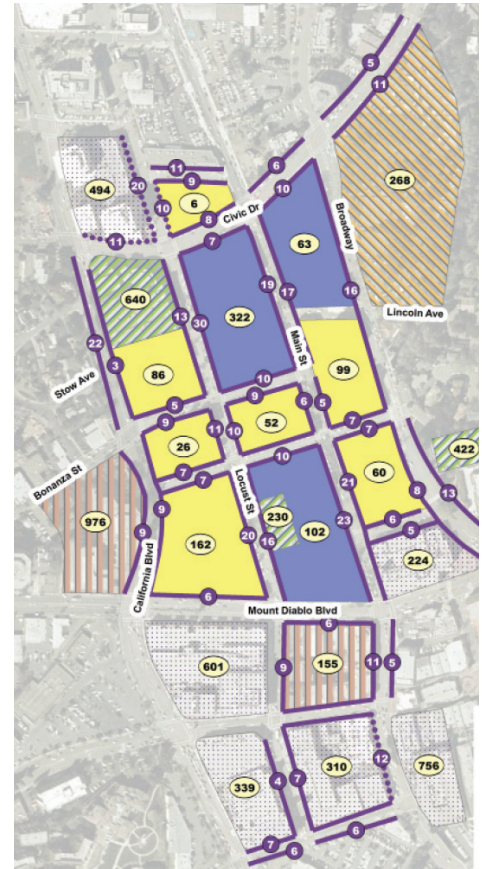
### *City Visions and Downtown Parking Goals*

- The City will support a vital and diverse economy
- The City will create and sustain a highly livable built environment
- The City is committed to reducing negative impacts on the environment

### *Parking Management Goals*

The goals of the Integrated Parking Management Plan are as follows:

- To enable enjoyment of the many amenities in the downtown
- To promote business and commerce
- To improve the residents' & visitor's experience
  - Give people clear, attractive, convenient choices on where to park
  - Give people ability to enjoy all that the downtown has to offer without frustration of finding parking
- To support a sustainable downtown
- Maintain a sales tax economic vision driven by an excellent customer experience.



## Process/Approach

The City of Walnut Creek conducted a Downtown Parking and Transportation Study in 2006 with Nelson/Nygaard. Some recommendations included:

- Revised Trolley Routes
- The establishment of a Downtown Parking Meter Zone; and
- A trial of Parking Pay stations

The City Council appointed a Downtown Parking Task Force (DTPTF) in 2009 to follow up on the recommendations made in the 2006 Study.

The DTPTF developed six major parking strategies, developed and conducted three surveys focused on customers, employees and inventory management ideas and conducted four focus group meetings. These efforts were folded into an integrated comprehensive parking management plan.

## Solutions/Strategies

### #1: Effective use of Garages (public/private) & Improvement of Garage Experience

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public garages underutilized</li><li>• On-Street parking is used for long term parking</li><li>• Garage are not perceived as friendly</li><li>• No Transit options near the garages</li><li>• Garages are not marketed enough</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess new technologies for improving garage user's experience</li><li>• Improve perception of safety in parking garages</li><li>• Explore shade structures on the top levels</li><li>• Establish collaborative relationships with private garage</li><li>• owners to increase available parking inventory</li><li>• Re-evaluate Special Event parking program</li></ul>

### #2: Successful Employee Parking Management

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employees park in prime spaces in front of businesses limiting access to customers</li><li>• Most employees don't have clear parking direction from their employers</li><li>• Need to offer the 1000's of employees downtown parking options that are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Safe</li><li>○ Convenient</li><li>○ Affordable</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a policy to encourage "parking nests" to provide employee parking in under-utilized on-street parking areas and/or public and private garages.</li><li>• Require developers to provide an employee parking management plan when seeking project approvals</li><li>• Improve and increase promotion of employee parking program so employees don't use customer on-street parking spaces</li></ul>

### #3: Effective Inventory Management

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perception – no parking downtown</li><li>• Reality – many empty parking spaces block or two away from core downtown (in garages and on street)</li><li>• Need to realign supply to meet demand<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Make lower demand spaces more attractive so people will park there</li><li>○ Encourage turnover in prime parking spots, during prime hours, so more people have chance to use them</li></ul></li><li>• Isn't one or other approach but integrated approach that gives people options on where to park</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create three clearly defined and identifiable downtown parking zones</li><li>• Give consumers better, clearer choices on where to park based upon they are going downtown to do</li><li>• Create more turnover and make it easier to find a spot in all areas</li></ul>

#### Zone One

High Demand Area  
707 Spaces

#### Zone Two

Lower Demand Area  
1343 Spaces

#### Zone Three

Public Garages  
1292 Spaces

## #4: Effective Communication about Downtown Parking Options through Outreach, Marketing and Signage

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can't choose a parking option if you don't know what they are</li> <li>• Need clear and consistent signage, marketing and outreach</li> </ul>	<p>Implement a highly visible, consistent signage program that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directional signs at entrances to City as well as other key places showing where parking is located and the number of spaces available</li> <li>• "Real time" information about number of available spaces at the garages and other important details</li> <li>• Special event signage visible before turning into garage</li> <li>• "Pedestrian" oriented signage promoting garages, and giving distances to key destinations (e.g. downtown library, 2 blocks) to encourage walking</li> <li>• Visible signage promoting trolley routes</li> <li>• Unified sign system that explains time limits, costs and zones, and is highly visible and consistent (perhaps color coded by zone)</li> <li>• A creative, integrated marketing plan on the various parking options and how to access them</li> <li>• Continued assessment of new technologies for improving communications about parking options</li> <li>• Establish a single point of contact in the City for all parking concerns</li> <li>• Enhance communication about downtown improvements accomplished through revenues from parking funds</li> </ul>

## #5: A Plan for Residents

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve resident experience</li> <li>• Give residents a reason to come downtown and take advantage of all the amenities</li> <li>• Better connect local residents with our local businesses</li> <li>• Residents may begin to understand the advantages of using parking garages thereby filling up an underutilized resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to research options such as a discount card for residents or a "frequent parker" card that:</li> <li>• Promote and market a positive parking experience for our residents.</li> <li>• Avoids the appearance of pitting residents against non-residents</li> <li>• Doesn't carry substantial administrative costs</li> </ul>

## #6: Effective Alternative Modes of Getting Around Downtown

Challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need simpler ways to get downtown without needing to drive and park</li><li>• Need to connect alternative modes of transit with parking options (especially the underutilized options)</li><li>• Encourages walking and greener forms of transit</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote bicycle access and improve bicycle facilities.</li><li>• Continue to promote “Park Once” strategies</li><li>• Promote and improve pedestrian connections between the downtown and residential neighborhoods</li><li>• Investigate car share programs</li><li>• Identify projects that will improve pedestrian experience from the garages as well as throughout the downtown</li><li>• Test street closures to enhance pedestrian amenities and customer experience downtown</li><li>• Assess trolley route; look at ways to integrate trolley with employee parking destination</li><li>• Improve promotion of the trolleys – including more visible maps to better connect garages with downtown trolley.</li></ul>

## Results & Next Steps

In February 2011, the Downtown Parking Task Force advanced recommendations to the City Council and the Transportation Commission in a joint study session. The Council heard public testimonies from diverse users groups. Both the Council and the Commission agreed on key policy elements of the plan such as maintaining 85% occupancy. City staff is preparing an implementation plan that includes the public participations tracks for each task. The tools are being designed to allow the Council to be able to give specific direction and the level of public participation on every element of the plan.

## Lessons Learned

The biggest challenges reported by staff for the Downtown parking management plan have been with implementation and building consensus among stakeholders. The selection of the right mix of stakeholders to serve on the Task Force was key.

Involving the task force members in preparing and presenting the findings brought deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexity of parking issues. Building active partnerships with major stakeholders such as retailers allowed the task force to realize the business side of parking decision making.

Flexibility to allow the task force to conclude the study was essential. The original vision to accomplish this over a couple of meetings was not a reasonable expectation.

The downtown parking plan introduces several complex policies that require buy off from several internal and external groups. The implementation plan requires the same collaborative approach to build consensus.